

PRESS RELEASE

WSET®

06-June-2008



WSET announce top-line results of major research project

The WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) recently commissioned Wine Intelligence to undertake a detailed research study to help WSET formulate its strategy for the next five years.

Ian Harris, Chief Executive of WSET explained: "The last piece of research we commissioned was four years ago, and we felt that it was necessary for us to have a more comprehensive dialogue with our stakeholders to help us to formulate our strategy going forward. The trade interviews, in the first stage, were conducted with prominent members of the industry and this helped us to shape the questionnaire which formed stage two - the quantitative stage of the research".

The research was based on trade interviews in three key market countries - UK, USA and Germany – followed by on-line quantitative research. The questionnaire was completed by over 2500 students, nearly 200 Approved Programme Providers of WSET courses and tutors, in addition to over 100 trade respondents holding senior posts in industry. A total of 55 countries were represented in the quantitative phase of the research, with students and tutors.

Commenting on the research project Lulie Halstead, CEO of Wine Intelligence, stated: "The quality of the interviews in the depth phase, plus the high number of respondents in the quantitative phase were very impressive for research of this type, and I can say with complete confidence that the results are a fair reflection of the views in the market. The top-line findings will help Ian and his team to move WSET forward over the next five years and we look forward to working with them as we help them to explore the research in more depth."

At a press conference at the London International Wine Fair, Ian Harris presented the top line findings which have given very clear indications of certain initiatives which WSET needs to consider for the way forward. The 12 key findings from the research were:-

1) WSET in UK is benchmark in many ways, but there is a need for classic account management

Ian Harris commented: "Although we created the UK business development team four years ago and have recently added an additional member, it is clear that employers, particularly in the UK are crying out for assistance with their training requirements. We will step up the account management aspect of WSET".

2) Outside UK, relatively low familiarity with WSET, but good reputation

"WSET programmes are run in 42 countries but it is clear that there is still a great deal of ground to cover and therefore a big opportunity to expand even further the WSET franchise. In countries where WSET programmes are already being run there are clear indicators that we need to increase our presence at international shows and events, and this will form part of our plan for the coming academic year"

3) Need for even more focus on commercial side of industry at Diploma level

"The introduction of a business related unit at diploma level in 2003 was clearly well overdue and the time has now come to increase the amount of education we offer to the global industry covering more of the commercial aspects. We will be doing further work on this aspect to establish exactly what the industry wants, and needs".

4) Course materials need constant updating to remain current and relevant

“Course materials, including powerpoint slides and session plans for tutors, are updated annually with interim updates being available to our students through the global campus area of the website but the research shows that there are clearly areas where there students feel that the material is not being kept up to date. This is something we will address with immediate effect”.

5) New media delivery methods need to be fast-tracked (mostly web-based)

“WSET already has a distance learning program in place at all levels of qualification. We have made significant investment in this area over the past four years and this is clearly an area where we need to increase our focus. In addition to e-learning, we are also working on creating an online assessment platform. Whilst education in wines and spirits has traditionally been most successful when delivered in the classroom it is clear that modern business priorities mean that many students are unable to attend regular classroom sessions”.

6) Teaching materials – need to ensure they are fit for purpose in all markets

“The issue here is that not all of the 336 centres delivering WSET programmes around the world use the teaching materials which we prepare for each qualification level. In 2008/9 we are increasing the amount of options for training tutors and part of this initiative will be ensuring that they have the most up-to-date and relevant material at their disposal”.

7) Distance Learning students need more support, and guidance

“Although we have on-line tutors in place at all levels, and the feedback we have received from students using this service is very positive, we clearly need to go further in terms of support for students who choose this method of education”.

8) Diploma students feel need for more support/guidance

“Many students who embark on the diploma underestimate the level of commitment and dedication required to attain this qualification. As the wine and spirit world grows so the syllabus becomes broader and deeper, and it is therefore imperative that we put additional measures in place to ensure that we meet the needs of diploma students, wherever they are in the world”.

9) New programs and qualifications present opportunities in some markets

“We were particularly interested in investigating service related qualifications for people working in the on premise sector plus the demand for a lower level spirits qualification. Overall the demand exists but the nature of what is required varies from market to market, and this will therefore require further investigation to ensure that we produce new qualifications fit for purpose in all markets. One area which we had not anticipated within the research was the demand for a basic sales training course and in some cases, a basic sales qualification. We will start the planning for this during the current academic year and look forward to working with industry to create a course with a qualification which is sought after by the industry”.

10) Industry crying out for CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“WSET launched the Institute of Wines and Spirits (IWS) in 2004 to meet the needs of diploma graduates, going back as far as 30 years, to ensure that they have the vehicle to gain knowledge of the world of wines and spirits and current, and ever-changing, market trends. Clearly we have failed to communicate the benefits of IWS sufficiently well, and we need to ensure that every one of the 5,500 diploma graduates is aware of the benefits of joining the Institute of Wines and Spirits. In 2007/8 we have started streaming events online to ensure that this is a facility available to industry professionals via the web. We must also be aware that there are a number of industry professionals in key positions who have not completed the diploma and it will become one of our stated goals to provide educational initiatives to ensure that continuing professional development is available for the entire industry”.

11) Opportunity to build a family of WSET alumni

“Again, the Institute of Wines and Spirits was designed, when it was launched in 2004, to create a network of WSET alumni, and although this has worked to a limited extent there are clearly opportunities to expand this further. WSET is the leading global provider of education and qualifications in the field of wines and spirits and we must ensure that industry professionals are made aware of the benefits of remaining within the WSET family”.

12) WSET needs to ensure that communicates more with its stakeholders

“This is the most telling finding of the research. Whilst we assume that communication links are strong, particularly with a vastly improved website, a monthly e-newsletter to stakeholders and prospective customers, a team of Business Development Managers and regular updates with the major companies in the industry, it is clear that we need to do more to ensure that everybody is aware of the WSET and what we have to offer”.

Ian added: “I was particularly interested in the fact that we need to communicate more with ALL of our stakeholders, including students, candidates, employers, APPs and tutors. As a result of the research, together with other events we have attended over the last month, where we would have had much dialogue with our stakeholders, I anticipate a very busy few months here at WSET.”

ends.....

EDITORS NOTES:

WSET is the largest global provider of education in wines and spirits and is approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. WSET has been developing the trade professional for over 39 years, and in the last academic year over 21,000 candidates in 42 countries and twelve languages sat a WSET examination. Find out more about WSET at www.wsetglobal.com

For further information contact Chris Kelly ckelly@wset.co.uk or Ian Harris iharris@wset.co.uk

Wine & Spirit Education Trust

International Wine & Spirit Centre

39-45 Bermondsey Street

London

SE1 3XF

T: +44 (0)20 7089 3800

F: +44 (0)20 7089 3847

E: wset@wset.co.uk

W: www.wsetglobal.com